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FACTS ABOUT AUSTIN ACRES PROJECT

Austin, Minnesota

Official Name: Austin Acres.

Location: In southeastern Minnesota, Mower County, 2.8 miles south of the city of Austin and 100 miles south of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Number of Units: The tract has been divided into 44 units on which a house, and combination barn-garage or garage and chicken house have been built.

History of Project: Austin Acres project was initiated by the Subsistence Homesteads Division of the Department of the Interior in December 1933, and transferred to the Resettlement Administration, May 15, 1935. It was completed on December 15 of that year.

Purpose of Project: Initiated to provide workman's garden homes, Austin Acres serves the seasonally and full-time employed workers in the local packing houses and other industries. It provides better housing and attempts to raise the standard of living of low-income workers through subsistence gardening. Each of the 44 tracts comprising the project consists of from one to nine acres of land and provides ample garden and orchard space.

Project Description: A tract of 216 acres of slightly rolling land comprises the project site. The northwest corner of the purchased area is wooded and the soil is composed of a top layer of black loam and a sub-soil varying between sandy and silty clay. All crops adapted to the crop belt may be grown successfully at the project. In addition to the land used for homesites, approximately 30 acres are used as a community pasture. Ten acres are used as a recreation area. Wells have been drilled on each homestead and electric pumps and pressure tanks complete the water supply system. Individual septic tank systems care for disposal of sewage. Although no gas is available to the homesteaders, electricity is furnished by a private utility. Telephone service is available. More than two miles of roads have been built to connect homesites with each other and with adjacent highways.

A community house includes an auditorium, a kitchen equipped for canning and preparing refreshments for community gatherings, a sewing or meeting room, and an office and library. It is the scene of numerous activities in a well-rounded community program.

House Description:

Each of the 44 tracts contains a house and outbuildings. The dwellings are of frame construction with basement. Eight houses have 4 rooms, 30 houses have 5 rooms, and 6 houses have 6 rooms. The 5 and 6-room houses are of two-story construction.

The Homesteaders:

The occupants of Austin Acres are a group of young married people whose family heads are regularly employed in the industries in the vicinity. The project gives residents an opportunity to convert their idle hours into productive work in the garden plots adjoining each homesite. About one-half the group now in residence are employed in the local factories. Of the entire group, 43 men and 36 women have had some farm experience.

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